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AUTHOR Gross, Richard E.: Dynneson, Thomas L.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses social studies practices, objectives, status, and concerns. It also provides recommendations for improving social studies teaching and research. Recommendations and ideas evolved from a two week conference of social studies educators held at Stanford University in summer, 1979. Conference objectives were to review social studies trends, evaluate innovative programs, exchange ideas among social studies educators, evolve guidelines for implementing new ideas, and develop proposals and recommendations for improving social studies. Activities involved participants in listening to formal presentations on social science disciplines and in discussing and presenting recommendations in small committees on critical social studies issues. Issues included social studies scope and sequence, basis for content, relationship between elementary and secondary school curricula, testing and measurement emphases, teacher training, status, innovative practices, and extending the impact of elementary social studies. Recommendations included that teacher training programs should include scope and sequence issues, social studies educators should work closely with textbook publishers, conceptual and skill development should be integrated into all social studies curricula, and social studies educators should become involved in the evaluation of achievement tests. (DB)

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A "White Paper" Summary Report and Recommendations Concerning Critical Issues in the Social Studies

by

Richard E. Gross
Stanford University

and

Thomas L. Dynneson
University of Texas
of the Permian Basin

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Social Studies Leadership Conference at Stanford University

Fifty-five social studies leaders met on the campus of Stanford University during the summer of 1979 in order to discuss and possibly suggest steps to resolve some critical issues currently facing the profession. Because of an NSF grant, Professor Richard E. Gross was able to sponsor the two-week conference in which social studies leaders from a number of states and school districts could meet for an exchange of ideas on the current status of the social studies. While funding was available for only twenty-five participants, a number of others attended the conference at their own expense.*

Several conference objectives were sent to the participants as a means by which to structure the activities of the conference. Gross recommended that participants be prepared to:

Review selected current trends in the social studies.

Report on and evaluate new social studies programs.

Exchange ideas and experiences between participants.

Evolve a set of guidelines whereby social studies leaders could implement new ideas and programs.

Develop proposals and recommendations that could help to improve the social studies in the future.

The activities at the conference were dominated by two types of sessions. Some morning and afternoon sessions were occupied by formal presentations on selected topics including: Global Education, Law Education, Values Education, Economic Education, Multi-ethnic Education, Anthropology Education, Citizenship Education,

* A list of the names and addresses of the participants and staff is available from Dr. R.E. Gross, School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305.

Futures Education and Women and Sexism in Education. Formal presentations were made by invited guests who were experts on each of the topics. Other sessions consisting of afternoon and evening meetings in which participants were organized into committees to study specific problems that were identified as critical issues currently facing the social studies profession. The participants selected the issues to be studied from an original list of topics prepared in advance of the conference. After reviewing the original list eight topics were selected as the most critical.

Eight Critical Issues in the Social Studies

Can we identify the most effective scope and sequence for the social studies curriculum?

Should there be a "common core" of shared social studies throughout the elementary and secondary curriculum?

What should be the basis for selection of content in the social studies?

What position should social studies educators take on achievement tests?

How can teacher change and improvement be achieved in the social studies?

What means are available to assure improved implementation of new courses, approaches, and materials in the social studies?

How can the impact of elementary school social studies be extended?

How can the status of the social studies be improved?

Each participant served on the committee of his or her choice. Committees were instructed to study the issue, exchange ideas and experiences related to the issue and prepare a committee report that would include recommendations for resolving the issue. Separate committee reports were filed and these reports would be part of an overall "White Paper" on critical issues facing the social studies.

When two weeks of study, meetings and discussion had been completed, the eight committees submitted their reports to the entire assembly of participants. Some of these reports were revised after the discussion which followed their oral presentation. Each committee filed its final report with Professor Gross and these are available from him. This summary of the issues and recommendations has been edited by Professors Thomas L. Dynneson and Richard Gross for review in this article.

* * *

Can we identify the most effective scope and sequence for the social studies curriculum?

Scope and sequence issues in the curriculum are often influenced by state departments of education and by decision made in individual school districts. The role of social studies educators has been to indirectly influence state and local officials and to develop related individual school and district guides. Commercial textbook publishers have relied on social studies educators for information, authorship and consultant advice when deciding on scope and sequence offerings; but the role of the social studies profession (National, state and local social studies organizations) in scope and sequence issues has not been clearly defined and has certainly not resulted in specific guidelines. As a consequence, there is no acceptable national scope and sequence structure for reference by state or local authorities or by individual teachers.

Since the 1960's the social studies has had many problems connected with curriculum issues. At present, overcrowding in the curriculum is of great concern. More curriculum programs are being developed in spite of current conditions, and to be accommodated each new program needs time and space within the curriculum if they are to make a contribution. A major decision facing school districts concerns the question of which programs to add and which to delete. Unfortunately states and school districts have had to wrestle with the issues of

scope and sequence without the aid of concrete professional recommendations. The final report of the committee on scope and sequence included the following recommendations:

> A model social studies scope and sequence should be developed which reflects a logical and consistent approach to content, skills and attitudes. The NCSS guidelines could serve as a point of reference for such a development program.
>
> Teacher training programs should include scope and sequence issues as part of their studies.
>
> Social studies teachers should have some training as generalists in all of the disciplines associated with the social studies curriculum so that they would be prepared to deal with scope and sequence issues.
>
> Teachers need to be competent in the areas of concept and skill development so that they could contribute to the resolution of scope and sequence specifics.
>
> Professional leaders should work closely with textbook publishers when new programs are being planned for the social studies.
>
> There is need for a national blue ribbon committee to deal with the issue of scope and sequence in the social studies.

* * *

Should there be a "common core" of shared social studies throughout the elementary and secondary curriculum?

Social studies curricula in the elementary and secondary schools share many common content topics. While course offerings throughout the grades cannot be matched topic for topic, there are broad areas of commonality. It is also clear thay key learnings need reinforcement. The core idea would support the notions of good curriculum construction that were described in the 1960's as part of a "spiral curriculum." Broad areas, including political processes, societal organization, economic organization, decision and decision making are a few of the topics that could comprise a "common core." While shared topics do exist at both the elementary and secondary level, there is no agreement within the profession as to what a "common core" curriculum should

contain. There is also a lack of agreement among social studies educators of what type of approach would be most appropriate for such a "common core;" some would favor a disciplinary approach while others would favor an interdisciplinary or some other approach.

As a result of their work, the committee that studied this issue put forth the following recommendations:

> The social studies should be taught as interdisciplinary subjects, but that all branches of the social sciences should be reasonably represented within the interdisciplinary approach.
>
> Conceptual and skill development should be an essential part of any "common core" curriculum model.
>
> In addition, beyond the essential core, electives in the social sciences should be offered throughout the secondary curriculum, and the elementary program should also stress the methodologies of the disciplines where appropriate.
>
> In-service workshops should be used extensively in connection with a "common core" curriculum as a means by which teachers could stay in touch with the rest of the curriculum.
>
> A national leadership committee is needed in order to develop and disseminate an exemplary "common core."

* * *

What should be the basis for selection of content in the social studies?

The commercial publishing market for the social studies contains a great variety of material for instruction in the social studies. Teachers and school district officials are faced with content selection decision for each grade level. The processes for selection of instructional materials varies from one school district or one state to the next. While these processes may be adequate in terms of screening materials, the decision-making process rests to a great extent on the preferences of those involved in the decision-making task. As a result, social studies curricula do not contain many of the same

basic elements. Selection processes could be improved if there was a general agreement within the social studies profession as to what constituted a "good" social studies program. There are basic elements which could serve as the basis for determining what "good" social studies' programs would contain. For example:

The need for students to participate in a democratic society.

The need for students to become independent learners so that they can cope with a changing society.

The need for students to develop the basic skills that would prepare them to live effectively in the future.

The need for students to develop sound value systems.

By identifying broad topics within the curriculum that most social studies educators would support, the selection process would be easier and there would be more unity within the curriculum.

The committee on selection of content recommended that:

Social studies content should be derived from the stated objectives of the social studies profession, and these objectives should be an important part of the selection process.

An effort should be made on behalf of the National Council for the Social Studies to identify and clarify the goals and objectives of the social studies.

The goals and objectives of the social studies should contain specific reference to content, values and skills.

National achievement tests for the social studies should contain items that are related to the objectives and goals of the profession.

* * *

What position should social studies educators take on achievement tests?

Many states have programs which use standardized achievement tests in the in the social studies. Student results on achievement tests influence

instruction in the social studies and indirectly the social studies curriculum. Therefore, it is important that social studies educators become involved in any testing program for the social studies. Social studies educators have an obligation to study the role of standardized achievement tests in:

Studying the affects of tests as a determining factor in course content.

Studying the affects of tests in determining professional standards for the profession.

Studying the content and construction of tests and test items in terms of their appropriateness.

By being better informed about standardized testing programs, control of the standards within the profession and the curriculum will be in the hands of the professional teacher.

The committee recommended the following:

Social studies educators should become involved in the process associated with the evaluation of achievement tests.

National Council for the Social Studies leaders should make an effort to identify the realistic expectations of an effective social studies curriculum.

A study should be made in which the constructive aspects of standardized achievement programs could be used to promote the goals of the profession.

* * *

How can teacher change and improvement be achieved in the social studies?

The teaching profession has gone from a period of rapid growth to a period of austerity. Teachers are less mobile, less secure and more reluctant to consider changes in instructional practices. There is also a reluctance on the part of administrators to promote innovation or change.

In spite of these existing conditions, changes and improvements can be made within school districts. These changes would be aimed at strengthening existing programs and improving the quality of instruction. By setting high professional standards strong teachers will be retained and instructional standards and practice will be improved. In order to improve standards for teachers, evaluation processes would also have to be improved. The following recommendations were among those adopted in order to promote teacher change and improvement:

Standards related to teacher selection and certification must be upgraded with the bulk consideration based on meritorious accomplishment.

Professional schools of education need to identify those attributes that are essential to the teaching profession, including the prime ability to communicate, and so shape their programs.

Personnel screening and assignment practices for school districts should be reviewed and updated in order to attract highly qualified candidates.

Evaluation programs that continually monitor teacher performance should be an important part of an overall teacher retention program.

Self evaluation and peer evaluation should be part of a yearly faculty improvement program.

Apprenticeship-type training should be encouraged and beginning teachers should be paired at least in part with experienced teachers during the initial years of employment.

School administrators should be evaluated in terms of their roles in teacher change and improvement as well as by pupil performance.

* * *

What means are available to assure improved implementation of new courses, approaches, and materials?

Gaining support for new social studies courses, approaches or materials is not an easy task. Institutions tend to resist change. A critical component of any change process is the implementation program which is used to establish the new program. The purpose of any implementation program is to gain support

for the program from those who are affected by it. It could be described as a process in which those who are affected by the program assume ownership for the program. How well this is done depends on how well the program is perceived in meeting the needs of those involved with the program.

After reviewing several implementation strategies, this committee concluded that the Normative Reeducation Strategy for change held the most promise as a general implementation process for the social studies. The Normative Reeducation Strategy holds that:

People are the basic unit of implementation

Open communication between all parties is an important part of implementation.

A sense of trust and lower status barriers between associates promotes the implementation process.

Adequate consideration must be given to existing programs.

Adequate consideration must be given to existing values and attitudes associated with the new and the old programs.

In addition to recommending the Normative Reeducation Strategy, this committee identified the following concerns:

All parties should understand the purpose of implementation.

Resources should be identified within the school district that can be used to support the implementation process.

Personnel affected by implementation should be involved in the key steps of the implementation process.

Teams of key personnel from different areas and levels affected should be formed.

Extensive training should be given to those responsible for the new program.

Support activities and follow through activities should be part of the implementation process.

* * *

How can the impact of elementary school social studies be extended?

The current emphasis on reading, writing, and math skills in the elementary school has not promoted the impact of elementary social studies. Elementary social studies programs have historically held a position of low priority in the primary grades and have only done moderately better in the intermediate grades. The problem is not that instruction in the social studies is unimportant; on the contrary, the potential for teaching skills, values, and academic content are appealing qualities of the social studies curriculum. The reason for the current position of the social studies in the elementary school is due primarily to the following: inadequate teacher preparation in the social studies disciplines, a lack of in-service workshops for incorporating and teaching social studies content, scheduling problems created by an overcrowded curriculum, school and district tests which do not include social studies learnings, and a lack of enthusiasm on the part of many elementary administrators for the social studies. This committee concluded that the following changes must be made if the impact of elementary social studies is to be extended:

Teaching certification programs must be strengthened by requiring more work in the social studies disciplines.

The National Council for the Social Studies should adopt clear and specific policies and recommendations regarding the structure of elementary social studies programs.

Local school districts should be encouraged to provide in-service workshops dealing with new social studies programs and methods.

The development of interdisciplinary programs which combine the language arts, math, and other disciplines with the social studies should be encouraged.

Social studies programs which balance the historical approach with the social science approach would be preferred to a single disciplinary approach.

Reading, writing, and math skills should be taught as part of the elementary social studies curriculum.

Administrators in the elementary school should adopt policies which promote teacher attention to and increased class time devoted to social studies.

District and state reviews and observation should be instituted to assure that individual elementary schools are providing adequate experiences in social education.

* * *

How can the status of the social studies be improved?

With declining enrollments and cutbacks in local, state, and national spending for education, the social studies have been adversely affected along with other areas of the curriculum. The emphasis on basic skills has not benefitted the social studies as it has other disciplines in the curriculum. In spite of the eroded status of the social studies, few attempts have been made to consolidate past gains or promote the discipline for its positive contributions. Instead, the proliferation of social studies programs that began in the 1960's continued into the 1970's. As a result, the curriculum is overcrowded and there is confusion among educators as to which programs to include and which to delete. If the status of the social studies is to be improved, the profession must take steps to consolidate and streamline the curriculum and promote the social studies in a positive way. By strengthening certification requirements, identifying the goals of the social studies curriculum, and prime related learnings, as well as by developing an awareness of the positive attributes of the social studies, the status of the profession can be improved. The following steps need to be taken to strengthen the status of the social studies:

The National Council for the Social Studies should gather information on the current status of the social studies curriculum and the profession and then help institute necessary remedial action.

Social studies educators need to become much more active as advocates of their curriculum.

Direct lines of communication between advocates of the social studies and the public need to be developed.

An advisory group should be organized within the profession in order to make specific recommendations for activities that would improve the status of the social studies.

Past presidents of the National Council for the Social Studies should serve in an advisory capacity to the current leadership of NCSS concerning the promotion of social studies education.

Institutional NCSS and state memberships should be made available to elementary schools, so that elementary administrators and teachers would be encouraged to attend and participate in the functions of the social studies profession.

Conclusion

The participants who attended the Stanford Leadership Conference attempted to address the issues that are currently of concern to their profession. During the two-week session they studied, discussed and made specific recommendations relating to eight issues that were identified as critical. Everyone at the conference seemed to recognize that during the next decade, enrollment and financial trends for education will not be good. At the same time, social studies education in the 1980's can play an important role in preparing the next generation of Americans for the future. The participants at the Stanford conference were concerned about the current status of the social studies curriculum and the directions that should be taken to strengthen that curriculum. These recommendations will hopefully lead to further discussion and action among educators as future policy and leadership goals and related programs are established.